

Question: Why do Christians go thru a judgement?

[Romans 14:10-12](#) says, "For we will all stand before God's judgment seat...so then, each of us will give an account of himself to God." [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) tells us, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." In the context, it is clear that both scriptures are referring to Christians, not unbelievers. The Judgment Seat of Christ, therefore, involves believers giving an account of their lives to Christ. The Judgment Seat of Christ does not determine salvation; that was determined by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf ([1 John 2:2](#)) and our faith in Him ([John 3:16](#)). All of our sins are forgiven and we will never be condemned for them ([Romans 8:1](#)). We should not look at the Judgment Seat of Christ as God judging our sins, but rather as God rewarding us for our lives. Yes, as the Scriptures say, we will have to give an account of ourselves. Part of this is surely answering for the sins we committed. However, that is not going to be the primary focus of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers are rewarded based on how faithfully they served Christ ([1 Corinthians 9:4-27](#); [2 Timothy 2:5](#)). The things we might be judged on are how well we obeyed the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)), how victorious we were over sin ([Romans 6:1-4](#)), how well we controlled our tongues ([James 3:1-9](#)). The Bible speaks of believers receiving crowns for different things based on how faithfully they served Christ ([1 Corinthians 9:4-27](#); [2 Timothy 2:5](#)). The various crowns are described in [2 Timothy 2:5](#); [2 Timothy 4:8](#); [James 1:12](#); [1 Peter 5:4](#); and [Revelation 2:10](#). [James 1:12](#) is a good summary of how we should think about the Judgment Seat of Christ, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."

Tonight's question for the Question Box is, "Will Christians Be Judged?" The Bible verse that prompts this question is 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

The answer, very briefly, is, "Yes, Christians will be judged." That is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying in that verse. He had been talking, in chapter 4, about the struggles involved in Christian ministry, which he likened to an on-going death. Then in chapter 5, Paul expresses his joy at the knowledge that death is followed by heavenly life. Backing up to verse 9, he writes, "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." The answer, therefore, is "Yes, Christians will be judged according to our works, as will everybody else."

There are, I am sure, two questions lurking behind that one question. The first question has to do with the possibility of condemnation in that judgment. "Might Christians be condemned in that judgment to come?" Here, we have an opportunity to employ the vital principle of Bible interpretation, that a difficult verse is interpreted according to others that bear on the subject. For instance, in this case we turn to Romans 8:1, which says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." On the basis of that one verse alone - and of course there are myriad others like it - we can conclude that while believers will be judged after death we will not

be condemned and consigned to hell. As Jesus tells us in John 6:40, "Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." That is a clear statement of justification at the end for all who look to Christ in faith.

The next question is this: "If salvation is by grace alone, apart from works, then how can believers be rewarded in heaven for our works?" First we have to observe that the New Testament definitely states that we will be rewarded for our good works. When we say that men and women are unable to please God by their works, we are talking about unregenerate sinners trying to be justified by works. That cannot be done. But it does not follow that regenerate Christians cannot please God, cannot do genuinely good works by means of an active faith in Christ. While the unsaved man cannot please God, the saved man can, by faith in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, although our works in this life are never perfect. Right after assuring us that salvation is not by works in Eph. 2, Paul says this, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (v. 10).

Remarkably, the Bible insists that we will be rewarded for good works we do, even though we know they are God's own work in our lives. A clear example is found in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Mt. 6:19-20). In other words, the saying, "You can't take it with you," simply isn't true when it comes to Christians. Indeed, we send such treasures ahead of ourselves in the form of good works. One of my own favorite verses comes from the Old Testament and makes a similar point: "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

How can this be? How can we get rewards for what is God's work of grace in us? The answer is God's grace in Christ. It is in Christ that our works are received by God with favor and rewarded by His grace. Here, the Westminster Confession puts it well, remarking that just as believers are accepted in Christ, so also are the believer's works accepted in Christ. God "looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections" (XVI. 6).

An excellent example of this is found in the Eleventh chapter of Hebrews. God there presents the heroes of the faith and you may notice that none of their blemishes and sins that are obvious in the Old Testament are revealed in this chapter. Between the Old Testament record and the New Testament recounting is the shed blood of Jesus, which washes all our sins away and leaves only that which is pleasing to God. Those He is delighted as a Father to reward in love. Those rewards, no doubt, will be spiritual, consisting of joy and love and other eternal blessings.

None of this makes sense to us, I admit, until we remember that God is love. It is in His nature to give, the way a Father does to a child. He gives us the strength to act, He guides us with His very hand, He puts His Spirit within to give us new motivations, and when all that is said and done, He will cry with joy, "Well done, my child! Well done!" He is the God of love.

"Therefore," Paul says, "we make it our goal to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Yes, it is this future judgment that should motivate us. It is knowing that the condemnation we have deserved will not be inflicted on us that gives us gratitude to please Him; and it also is the anticipation of "solid joys and lasting pleasures" that encourages us in hardship to serve Him, looking forward to eternal rewards in heaven. The effect is to make our present actions purposeful. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, our work will be shown for what it is, either burned up as simple chaff while we are saved, or refined to shine forever and ever, like the stars in the heaven, to the glory of God and to our own eternal delight.